

McClure's Magazine

CONTENTS FOR JANUARY, 1903

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TERMS: \$1.00 A YEAR IN ADVANCE; 10 CENTS A NUMBER

Subscriptions are received by all Newsdealers and Booksellers, or may be sent direct to the Publishers.

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THE S. S. McCLURE CO., 141-155 East 25th Street, New York City

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THE FLYING DEATH

A Story in Three Writings and a Telegram

BY SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

PART I.—THE TRACKS IN THE SAND

DOCUMENT NO. 1. *A Letter of Explanation from Harris Haynes, Reporter for "The New Era," off on Vacation, to his Managing Editor*

MONTAUK POINT, L. I.,
Sept. 20, 1902.

MR. JOHN CLARE,
Managing Editor, The New Era,
New York City.

My Dear Mr. Clare: Here is a case for your personal consideration. You will see presently why I have not put it on the wire. If it resolves itself into anything sufficiently reasonable to print, there will be time for that later; at present it is—or, at least, it would appear on paper—a bit of pure insanity. Lest you should think it that, and myself the victim, I have two witnesses of character and reputation who will corroborate every fact in the case, and who go farther with the incredible inferences than I can bring myself to do. They are Professor Willis Ravenden, expert in entomology and an enthusiast in every other branch of science, and Stanford Colton, son of old Colton of the Button Trust, and himself a medical student close upon his diploma. Colton, like myself, is recuperating. Professor Ravenden is studying the metamorphosis of a small, sky-blue butterfly species of bug with a disjointed name which inhabits these parts but is rapidly leaving in consequence of his activity and ardor in the hunt.

We three constitute the total late-season patronage of Third House, and probably five per cent. of the population of this forty square miles of grassland, the remainder being the men of the Life Saving Service, the farmer families of First, Second, and Third Houses, and a little settlement of fishermen on the Sound side. There's splendid isolation for you, within a hundred miles of New York. A good thing, too, if the case works out into something big, for there is little danger of its reaching any of the other newspaper offices.

This afternoon—yesterday, to be accurate, as it is now past midnight—we three went out for a tramp. On our return we ran into

a fine, driving rain that blotted out the landscape. It's no trick at all to get lost in this country, where the hillocks were all hatched out of the same egg, and the scrub-oak patches out of the same acorn. For an hour or so we circled around. Then we caught the booming of the surf plainly, and came presently to the crest of the sand-cliff, eighty feet above the beach. As the mist blew away, we saw, a few yards out from the cliff's foot, and a short distance to the east, the body of a man lying on the hard sand.

There was something in the huddled posture that struck the eye with a shock as of violence. With every reason for assuming, at first sight, the body to have been washed up, I somehow knew that the man had not met death by the waves. Where we stood the cliff fell too precipitously to admit of descent; but opposite the body it was lower, and here a ravine cut sharply through a dip between the hills at right angles to the beach. We half fell, half slipped down the abrupt declivity, made our way to the gully's opening, which was almost blocked by a great boulder, and came upon a soft and pebbly beach only a few feet wide, beyond which the hard, clean level of sand stretched to the receding waves. As we reached the open a man appeared around a point to the northward, saw the body, and broke into a run. Colton had started toward the body, but I called him back. I didn't want the sand marked up just then. Keeping close to the cliff's edge, we went forward to meet the man. As soon as he could make himself heard above the surf he hailed us.

"How long has that been there?"

"I've just found it," said Colton as we turned out toward the sea. "It must have been washed up at high tide."

"I'm the patrol from the Bow Hill Station," said the man briefly.

"We are guests at Third House," said I.

"We'll go through with this together."

"Come along, then," said he.

We were now on a line with the body, which lay with the head toward the waves. The pa-

troop suddenly checked and exclaimed, "It's Paul Serdholm." Then he rushed forward with a great cry, "He's been murdered!"

"Oh, surely not murdered," expostulated the Professor nervously. "He's been drowned, and——"

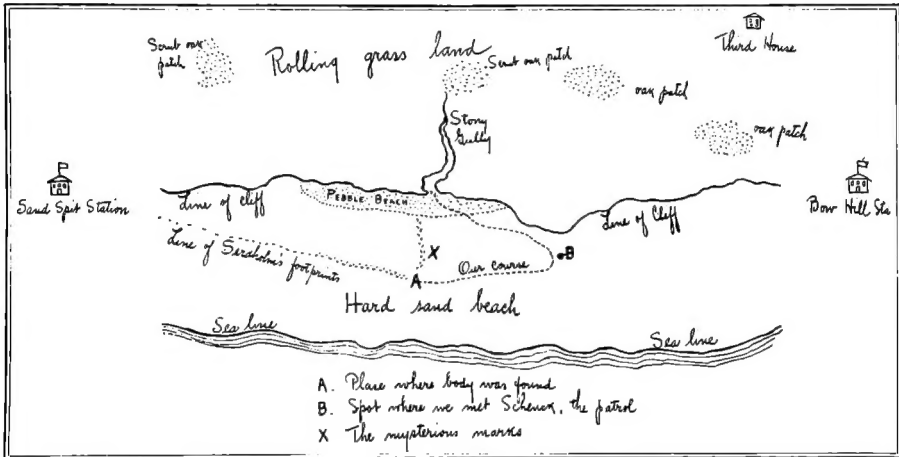
"Drowned!" cried the patrol in a heat of contempt. "And how about that gash in the back of his neck? He's the guard from Sand Spit, two miles below. Three hours ago I saw him on the cliff yonder. Since then he's come and gone betwixt here and his station. And——" he gulped suddenly and turned upon us so sharply that the Professor jumped—"what's he met with?"

see the whole country. Keep off that sand, can't you? Make a detour to the gully."

"And what will you do?" inquired Colton, looking at me curiously.

"Stay here and study this out," I replied in a low tone. "You and the Professor meet me at Sand Spit in half an hour. Patrolman, if you don't see anything, come back here in fifteen minutes." He hesitated. "I've had ten years' experience in murder cases," I added. "If you will do as you're told for the next few minutes, we should clear this thing up."

No sooner had they disappeared on the high ground than I set myself to the solution of



MAP SENT TO MR. CLARE BY HAYNES

"The wound might have been made by the surf dashing him on a sharp rock," I suggested.

"No, sir," said the patrol with emphasis. "The tide ain't this high in a month. It's murder, that's what it is—bloody murder," and he bent over the dead man, with twitching shoulders.

"He's right," said Colton, who had been hastily examining the corpse. "This is no drowning case. The man was stabbed, and died instantly. Was he a friend of yours?" he asked of the patrol.

"No; nor of nobody's, was Paul Serdholm," replied the man. "No later than last week we quarreled." He paused, looking blankly at us.

"How long would you say he had been dead?" I asked Colton.

"A very few minutes."

"Then get to the top of the cliff and scatter," I said. "The murderer must have escaped that way. From the hilltop you can

the problem. If you will look at the rough map inclosed, you will see how simple it should have been. Inland from the body stretched the hard beach. Not one of us had stepped between the body and the soft sand into which the cliff sloped. In this mass of rubble, footprints would be indeterminate. Anywhere else they should stand out like the stamp on a coin.

As we approached I had noticed that there were no prints to the north. On the side of the sea there was nothing except numerous faint bird tracks, extending almost to the water. Taking off my shoes, I followed the spoor of the dead man. It stood out, plain as a poster, to the westward. For a hundred yards I followed it. There was no parallel track. To make certain that his slayer had not crept upon him from that direction, I examined the prints for the marks of superimposed steps. None was there. Three sides, then, were eliminated. My first hasty glance at the sand between the body and the hills

had shown me nothing. Here, however, must be the evidence. Striking off from the dead man's line, I walked out upon the hard surface.

The sand was deeply indented beyond the body, where the three men had hurried across to the cliff. But no other footmark broke its evenness. Not until I was almost on a line between the body and the mouth of the gully did I find a clue. Clearly imprinted on the clean level was the outline of a huge claw. There were the five talons and the nub of the foot. A little forward and to one side was a similar mark, except that it was slanted differently. Step by step, with starting eyes and shuddering mind, I followed the trail. Then I became aware of a second, confusing the first, the track of the same creature. At first the second track was distinct, then it merged with the first, only to diverge again. The talons were turned in the direction opposite to the first spoor. From the body to the soft sand stretched the unbroken lines. Nowhere else within a radius of many yards was there any other indication. The sand lay blank as a white sheet of paper; as blank as my mind, which struggled with one stupefying thought—that between the body of the dead life-saver and the refuge of the cliff no creature had passed except one that stalked on monstrous clawed feet. You will appreciate now, Mr. Clare, that this wasn't just the thing to inflict upon a matter-of-fact telegraph editor, without preparing his mind.

My first thought was to preserve the evidence for a more careful examination. I hastily collected some flat rocks and had covered those tracks nearest the soft sand when I heard a hail. For the present I didn't want the others to know what I had found. I wanted to think it out, undisturbed by conflicting theories. So I hastily returned, and was putting on my shoes when the Bow Hill patrolman—his name was Schenck—came out of the gully.

"See anything?" I called.

"Nothing to the northward. Have you found anything?"

"Nothing definite," I replied. "Don't cross the sand there. Keep along down. We'll go to the Sand Spit Station and report this."

But the man was staring out beyond my little column of rock shelters.

"What's that thing?" he said, pointing to the nearest unsheltered print. "My God! It looks like a bird track. And it leads straight to the body," he cried, in a voice that jangled on my nerves. But when he began to look

fearfully overhead, into the gathering darkness, drawing in his shoulders like one shrinking from a blow, that was too much. I jumped to my feet, grabbed him by the arm, and started him along.

"Don't be a fool," I said. "Keep this to yourself. I won't have a lot of idiots prowling around those tracks. Understand? You're to report this murder, and say nothing about what you don't know. Later we'll take it up again."

The man seemed stunned. He walked along quietly, close to me, and it was no comfort to feel him, now and again, shaken by a violent shudder. We had nearly reached the station when Professor Ravenden and Colton came down to the beach in front of us. Colton had nothing to tell. The professor reported having started up a fine specimen of his sky-blue prey, and regretted deeply the lack of his net. If anything but a butterfly had bumped into him I don't believe he would have noticed it.

Before we reached the station, I cleared another point to my satisfaction.

"The man wasn't stabbed. He was shot," I said.

"I'll stake my life that's no bullet wound," cried Colton quickly. "I've seen plenty of shooting cases. The bullet never was cast that made such a gap in a man's head as that. It was a sharp instrument, with power behind it."

"To Mr. Colton's opinion I must add my own, for what it is worth," said Professor Ravenden.

"Can you qualify as an expert?" I demanded with the rudeness of rasped nerves, and in some surprise at the tone of certainty in the old boy's voice.

"When in search of a sub-species of the *Papilionidæ* in the Orinoco region," said he mildly, "my party was attacked by the Indians that infest the river. After we had beaten them off, it fell to my lot to attend the wounded. I thus had opportunity to observe the wounds made by their slender spears. The incision under consideration bears a rather striking resemblance to the spear gashes which I then saw. I may add that I brought away my specimens of *Papilionidæ* intact, although we lost most of our provisions."

"No man has been near enough the spot where Serdholm was struck down to stab him," I said. "Our footprints are plain; so are his. There are no others. The man was shot by some one lying in the gully or on the cliff."

"I'll bet you five hundred to five dollars

that the autopsy doesn't result in the finding of a bullet," cried Colton.

I accepted, and it was agreed that he should stay and report from the autopsy. At the station I talked with various of the men, and, assuming for the time that the case presented no unusual features of murder, tried to get at some helpful clue. Motive was my first aim. Results were scant. It is true that there was a general dislike of Serdholm, who was a moody and somewhat mysterious character, having come from nobody knew whence. On the other hand, no one had anything serious against him. The four clues that I struck, such as they were, I can tabulate briefly.

(I.) A week ago Serdholm returned from Amagansett with a bruised face. He had been in a street fight with a local loafer who had attacked him when drunk. Report brought back by one of the farmers that the life-saver beat the other fellow soundly, who went away threatening vengeance. Found out by 'phone that the loafer was in Amagansett as late as five o'clock this afternoon.

(II.) Two months ago Serdholm accused a local fisherman of stealing some tobacco. Nothing further since heard of the matter.

(III.) Three weeks ago stranded juggler and mountebank found his way here, and asked aid of Serdholm; claimed to be his cousin. Serdholm turned him down. Man returned next day. Played some tricks and collected a little money from the men. Serdholm, angry at the jeers of the men about his relative, threw a heavy stick at him, knocking him down and out. As soon as he was able to walk, juggler went away crying. Not since seen.

(IV.) This is the most direct clue for motive and opportunity. Coast-guard Schenck (the man who met us at the scene of the murder) quarreled with the dead man over the daughter of a farmer, who prefers Schenck. They fought, but were separated. Schenck blacked Serdholm's eye. Serdholm threatened to get square. Schenck cannot prove absolute *alibi*. His bearing and behavior, however, are those of an innocent man. Moreover, the knife he carried was too small to have made the wound that killed Serdholm. And how could Schenck—or any other man—have stabbed the victim and left no track on the sand? That is the blank wall against which I come at every turn of conjecture.

Professor Ravenden, Schenck, and I started back, we two to Third House, Schenck to his station. Colton remained to wait for the cor-

oner, who had sent word that he would be over as soon as a horse could bring him. As we were parting Schenck said:

"Gentlemen, I'm afraid there's likely to be trouble for me over this."

"It's quite possible," I said, "that they may arrest you."

"God knows I never thought of killing Serdholm or any other man. But I had a grudge against him, and I wasn't far away when he was killed. The only evidence to clear me is those queer tracks."

"I shall follow those until they lead me somewhere," said I, "and I do not myself believe, Schenck, that you had any part in the thing."

"Thank you," said the guard. "Good-night."

Professor Ravenden turned to me as we entered the house.

"Pardon a natural curiosity. Did I understand that there were prints on the sand which might be potentially indicative?"

"Professor Ravenden," said I, "there is an inexplicable feature to this case. If you'll come up to my room, I should very much like to draw on your fund of natural history."

When we were comfortably settled I began. "Do you know this neck of land well?"

"In the study of a curious and interesting variant of the *Lycæna pseudargiolus*, I have covered most of it, from here to the Hither Wood."

"Have you ever heard of an ostrich farm about here?"

"No, sir. Such an enterprise would be practicable only in the warm months."

"Would it be possible for a wandering ostrich or other huge bird, escaped from some zoo, to have made its home here?"

"Scientifically quite possible. May I inquire the purpose of this? Can it be that the tracks referred to by the patrol were the cloven hoof-prints of—"

"Cloven hoofs!" I cried in sharp disappointment. "Is there no member of the ostrich family that has claws?"

"None now extant. In the processes of evolution the claws of the ostrich, like its wings, have gradually—"

"Is there any huge-clawed bird large enough and powerful enough to kill a man with a blow of its beak?"

"No, sir," said the Professor. "I know of no bird which would venture to attack man except the ostrich, emu, or cassowary, and the fighting weapon of this family is the hoof, not the beak. But you will again pardon me if I ask—"

"Professor, the only thing that approached Serdholm within striking distance walked on a foot armed with five great claws." I rapidly sketched on a sheet of paper a rough, but careful, drawing. "And there's its sign manual," I added, pushing it toward him.

Imagination could hardly picture a more precise, unemotional, and conventionally scientific man than Professor Ravenden. Yet, at sight of the paper, his eyes sparkled, he half-started from his chair, a flush rose in his cheeks, he looked briskly and keenly from the sketch to me, and spoke in a voice that rang with a deep under-thrill of excitement.

"Are you sure, Mr. Haynes—are you quite sure that this is substantially correct?"

"Minor details may be inexact. In all essentials, that will correspond to the marks made by something that walked from the mouth of the gully to the spot where we found the body, and back again."

Before I had fairly finished the Professor was out of the room. He returned almost immediately with a flat slab of considerable weight. This he laid on the table, and taking my drawing, sedulously compared it with an impression, deep-sunken into the slab. For me a single glance was enough. That impression, stamped as it was on my brain, I would have identified as far as the eye could see it.

"That's it," I cried, with the eagerness of triumphant discovery. "The bird from whose foot that cast was made is the thing that killed Serdholm."

"Mr. Haynes," said the entomologist dryly, "this is not a cast."

"Not a cast?" I said in bewilderment. "What is it, then?"

"It is a rock of the Cretaceous period."

"A rock?" I repeated dully "Of what period?"

"The Cretaceous. The creature whose footprint you see there trod that rock when it was soft ooze. That may have been one hundred million years ago. It was at least ten million."

I looked again at the rock, and unnecessary emotions stirred among the roots of my hair.

"Where did you find it?" I asked.

"It formed a part of Mr. Stratton's stone fence. Probably he picked it up in his pasture yonder. The maker of the mark inhabited the island where we now are—this land was then distinct from Long Island—in the incalculably ancient ages."

"What did this bird thing call itself?" I demanded. A sense of the ghastly ridiculousness of the thing was jostling in the core of my brain, a strong shudder of mental

nausea born of the void into which I was gazing.

"It was not a bird. It was a reptile. Science knows it as the Pteranodon."

"Could it kill a man with its beak?"

"The first man came millions of years later—or so science thinks," said the Professor. "However, primeval man, unarmed, would have fallen an easy prey to so formidable a brute as this. The Pteranodon was a creature of prey," he continued, with an attempt at pedantry which was obviously a ruse to conquer his own excitement. "From what we can reconstruct, a reptile stands forth spreading more than twenty feet of bat-like wings, and bearing a four-foot beak as terrible as a bayonet. This monster was the undisputed lord of the air; as dreadful as his cousins of the earth, the Dinosaurs, whose very name carries the significance of terror."

"And you mean to tell me that this billion-years-dead flying sword-fish has flitted out of the darkness of eternity to kill a miserable coast-guard within a hundred miles of New York, in the year 1902?" I cried. He had told me nothing of the sort. I didn't want to be told anything of the sort. I wanted reassuring. But I was long past weighing words.

"I have not said so," replied the entomologist quickly. "But if your diagram is correct, Mr. Haynes—if it is reasonably accurate—I can tell you that no living bird ever made the prints which it produces, that science knows no five-toed bird and no bird, whatsoever, of sufficiently formidable beak to kill a man. Furthermore, that the one creature known to science which could make that print, and could slay man or a creature far more powerful than man, is the tiger of the air, the Pteranodon. Probably, however, your natural excitement, due to the distressing circumstances, has led you into error, and your diagram is inaccurate."

"Will you come and see?" I demanded.

"Willingly. I shall have to ask your help, however, with the rock. We would best sup first, I think."

It was a hasty supper. We got a light, for it was now very dark, and, taking turns with the lantern and the Cretaceous slab (which hadn't lost any weight with age, by the way), we went direct to the shore and turned westward. Presently a light appeared around the face of the cliff, and Colton hailed us. He was on his way back to Third House, but of course joined us in our excursion.

I hastily explained to him the matter of the footprints, the diagram, and the fossil marks.

"Professor Ravenden would have us believe that Serdholm was killed by a beaked ghou that lived ten or a hundred or a thousand million years ago," I said recklessly. "A few years one way or the other doesn't make any odds."

"I'll tell you one thing," said Colton gravely. "He wasn't killed by a bullet. It was a stab wound. A broad-bladed knife or something of that sort, but driven with terrific power. The autopsy settled that. You lose your bet, Haynes. Why," he cried suddenly, "if you come to that, it wasn't unlike what a heavy, sharp beak would make. But—but—this Pteranodon—is that it?—Oh, the devil! I thought all those pterano-things were dead and buried before Adam's great-grandfather was a protoplasm."

"Science has assumed that they were extinct," said the Professor. "But a scientific assumption is a mere makeshift, useful only until it is overthrown by new facts. We have prehistoric survivals—the gar of our rivers is unchanged from his ancestors of fifteen million years ago. The creature of the water has endured; why not the creature of the air?"

"Oh, come off," said Colton seriously. "Where could it live and not have been discovered?"

"Perhaps at the north or south pole," said the Professor. "Perhaps in the depths of unexplored islands. Or possibly inside the globe. Geographers are accustomed to say loosely that the earth is an open book. Setting aside the exceptions which I have noted, there still remains the interior, as unknown and mysterious as the planets. In its possible vast caverns there may well be reproduced the conditions in which the Pteranodon and its terrific contemporaries found their suitable environment on the earth's surface, ages ago."

"Then how would it get out?"

"The violent volcanic disturbances of this summer might have opened an exit."

"Oh, that's too much!" I protested. "I was at Martinique myself, and if you expect me to believe that anything came out of that welter of flame and boiling rocks alive—"

"You misinterpret me again," said the Professor blandly. "What I intended to convey is that these eruptions are indicative of great seismic changes, in the course of which vast openings may well have occurred in far parts of the earth. However, I am merely defending the Pteranodon's survival as an interesting possibility. My own belief is that your diagram, Mr. Haynes, is faulty."

"Hold the light here, then," I said, laying

down the slab, for we were now at the spot. "I will convince you as to that."

While the Professor held the light I uncovered one of the tracks. A quick exclamation escaped him. He fell on his knees beside the print, and as he compared the to-day's mark on the sand with the rock print of millions of years ago, his breath came hard. I would not care to say that I breathed as regularly as usual. When he lifted his head, his face was twitching nervously.

"I have to ask your pardon, Mr. Haynes," he said. "Your drawing was faithful."

"But what in Heaven's name does it mean?" cried Colton.

"It means that we are on the verge of the most important discovery of modern times," said the Professor. "Savants have hitherto scouted the suggestions to be deduced from the persistent legend of the roc, and from certain almost universal North American Indian lore, notwithstanding that the theory of some monstrous winged creature widely different from any recognized existing forms is supported by more convincing proofs. In the north of England, in 1844, reputable witnesses found the tracks, after a night's fall of snow, of a creature with a pendent tail, which made flights over houses and other obstructions, leaving a trail much like this before us. There are other corroborative instances of a similar nature. In view of the present evidence, I would say that this was unquestionably a Pteranodon, or a descendant little altered and a gigantic specimen, for these tracks are distinctly larger than the fossil marks. Gentlemen, I congratulate you both on your part in so epoch-making a discovery."

"Do you expect a sane man to believe this thing?" I demanded.

"That's what I feel," said Colton. "But, on your own showing of the evidence, what else is there to believe?"

"But, see here," I expostulated, all the time feeling as if I were arguing in and against a dream. "If this is a flying creature, how explain the footprints leading up to Serdholm's body, as well as away from it?"

"Owing to its structure," said the Professor, "the Pteranodon could not rapidly rise from the ground in flight. It either sought an acclivity from which to launch itself, or ran swiftly along the ground, gathering impetus for a leap into the air with outspread wings. Similarly, in alighting it probably ran along on its hind feet before dropping to its small fore feet. Now, suppose the Pteranodon to be on the cliff's edge, about to start

upon its evening flight. Below it appears a man. Its ferocious nature is aroused. Down it swoops, skims swiftly with pattering feet toward him, impales him on its dreadful beak, then returns to climb the cliff and again launch itself for flight."

All this time I had been holding one of the smaller rocks in my hand. Now I flung it toward the gully and turned away, saying vehemently:

"If the shore was covered with footprints I wouldn't believe it. It's too——"

I never finished that sentence. From out of the darkness there came a hoarse cry. Heavy wings beat the air with swift strokes. In that instant panic seized me. I ran for the shelter of the cliff, and after me came Colton. Only the Professor stood his ground, but it was with a tremulous voice that he called to us:

"That was a common marsh or short-eared owl that arose; the *Asio accipitrinus* is not rare hereabouts. There is nothing further to do to-night, and I believe that we are in some peril remaining here, as the Pteranodon appears to be nocturnal."

We returned to him ashamed. But all the way home, despite my better sense, I walked under an obsession of terror hovering in the blackness above.

So here is the case as clearly as I can put it. I shall have time to work it out unhampered, as the remoteness of the place is a safeguard so far as news is concerned, and only we three know of the Pteranodon prints.

It is now 4 A.M., and I will send this over by the early wagon, which takes stuff to market. Then I'll get a couple of hours' sleep

and go back to the place before anyone else overruns it with tracks. It has come on to rain, and the trail will be wiped out, I fear, except the spots still protected by my rock shelters. Professor Ravenden is going to write a monograph on the survival of the Pteranodon. So there is one basis for a newspaper story. If he can afford to identify himself with that theory, surely we can.

It seems like a nightmare—formless, meaningless. What you will think of it I can only conjecture. But you must not think that I have lost my senses. I am sane enough; so is Colton; so, to all appearances, is Professor Ravenden. The facts are exactly as I have written them down. I have left no clue untouched thus far. I will stake my life on the absence of footprints. And it all comes down to this, Mr. Clare: Pteranodon or no Pteranodon, as sure as my name is Haynes, the thing that killed Paul Serdholm never walked on human feet.

Very sincerely yours,

HARRIS D. HAYNES.

P.S.—I shall send for a gun to-morrow, and if there's any queer thing flying I'll try to get a shot at it.

DOCUMENT No. 2. *A telegram*

MONTAUK POINT, N. Y.,
8 A.M., Sept. 21, 1902.

JOHN CLARE, Managing Editor,
New Era Office, N. Y.

Haynes mysteriously killed on beach this morning. Stab wound through heart. Send instructions.

WILLIS RAVENDEN,
STANFORD COLTON.

(To be concluded in February)



McClure's Magazine

CONTENTS FOR FEBRUARY, 1903

COVER DESIGNED BY WILL H. LOW

"WALKED WITH ELEANOR ALONG THE COUNTRY ROAD, WHITE IN THE MOONLIGHT" *Frontispiece*
To illustrate page 380. Drawn by W. D. Stevens

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THE S. S. McCLURE CO., 141-155 East 25th Street, New York City

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THE FLYING DEATH

A Story in Three Writings and a Telegram

BY SAMUEL HOPKINS ADAMS

PART II. THE END OF THE TRAIL

DOCUMENT No. 3 (A). *Extract from letter written by Stanford Colton to his father, John Colton, Esq., of New York City. Date, September 21st, 4 P.M.*

. . . . So there, my dear dad, is the case against the Pteranodon. To your hard business sense it will seem a thing for laughter. You wouldn't put a cent in Pteranodon stock on the word of an idealistic, scientific theorist like old Ravenden, backed by a few queer marks on a beach. Very well, neither would I. Just the same, I ducked and ran when the owl flapped out from the cliff. And I wonder if you wouldn't have been trailing us to shelter yourself, had you been along.

Now as to poor Haynes. I was the last person to speak to him. He woke me out of a troubled dream walking along the hall at six o'clock this morning.

"Is that you, Haynes?" I called.

"Yes," he said. "I'm off for the beach."

"Wait fifteen minutes, and I'll go with you," I suggested.

"If you don't mind, Colton, I'd rather you wouldn't. I want to go over the ground alone, first. But I wish you'd come down after breakfast, and join me."

"All right," I said. "It's your game to play. Good luck. Oh, hold on a minute. Have you got a gun?"

"No," he answered.

"Better take mine."

"You must have been having bad dreams," he said lightly. "A good night's rest has shooed the Professor's Cretaceous jub-jub bird out of my mental premises. Anyhow, I don't think a revolver would be much use against it, do you? But I'm much obliged."

I was now up and at the door. "Well, good luck," I said again, and for some reason I reached out and shook hands with him.

He looked rather surprised—perhaps just a bit startled—but he only said: "See you in a couple of hours."

Sleep was not for me after that. I tried it, but it was no go. The Stratton family almost expired of amazement when I showed up for seven o'clock breakfast. Half an hour later I was on the way to find Haynes. I went di-

rectly down the beach. Haynes had gone this way before me, as I saw by his tracks. It was a dead-and-alive sort of morning—gray with a mist that seemed to smother sound as well as sight. I went forward with dampened spirits and little heart in the enterprise. As I came to the turn of the cliffs that opens up the view down the shore I hallooed for Haynes. No answer came. Again I shouted, and this time as my call drew no answer I confess that a clammy feeling of loneliness hastened my steps. I rounded the cliff at a good pace and saw ahead what checked me like a blow.

Almost at the spot where we had found Serdholm, a man lay sprawled grotesquely. Though the face was hidden and the posture distorted, I knew him instantly for Haynes, and as instantly knew he was dead. There's a bad streak in me, dad, and it came out right there, for I had wheeled to run before I realized the shame of it. Then, thank God, I caught myself, and stopped. As I turned again my foot struck a small rock. It wasn't much of a weapon, but it was the best at hand. I picked it up and went forward to the body, sickening at every step.

Haynes had been struck opposite the gully. The weapon that killed him had been driven with fearful impetus between his ribs, from the back. A dozen staggering prints showed where he had plunged forward before he fell. The heart was touched, and he must have been dead almost on the stroke. His flight was involuntary—the blind, mechanical instinct of escape from death. To one who had seen its like before, there was no mistaking that great gash in his back. Haynes had been killed as Serdholm was. But for what cause? What possible motive of murder could embrace those two who had never known or so much as spoken to each other? No; it was reasonless: the act of a thing without mind, inspired by no motive but the blood-thirst, the passion of slaughter. At that, the picture of the Pteranodon, as the Professor had drawn it, took hold of my mind. I ran to the point whence Haynes had staggered. Begin-

ning there, in double line over the clean sand, stretched the grisly track of the talons. Except for them the sand was untouched.

So great an access of horror possessed me that I became, for the moment, irresponsible. Perhaps it was instinct that sent me to the sea. I ran in to my knees, dropped on all fours, and not only plunged my head in, but took great gulps of the salt water. The retching that followed cleared my brain. I was able to command myself as I returned to the body of Haynes. Yet it was still with an overmastering repulsion that I scanned the heavens for wings; and when I came to climb to the cliff's top, for a better view, three several times my knees gave way, and I rolled to the gully. Nothing was in sight. Again I returned to the body, now somewhat master of myself. A hasty examination convinced me that Haynes had been dead for some time, perhaps an hour. There was but one thing to do. I set off for the house at my best speed.

Of the formalities that succeeded there is no need to speak; but following what I thought Haynes's method would have been, I investigated the movements of Schenck, the patrolman, that morning. From six o'clock to eight he was at the station. His alibi is solid. In the killing of poor Haynes he had no part. That being proved, sufficiently establishes his innocence of the Serdholm crime. Both were done by the same murderer.

Professor Ravenden is now fixed in his belief that the Pteranodon, or some little-altered descendant, did the murders. I am struggling not to believe it, yet it lies back of all my surmises as a hideous probability. One thing I know, that nothing would tempt me alone upon that beach to-night. To-morrow morning I shall load up my Colt's and go down there with the Professor, who is a game old theorist, and can be counted on to see this through. He is blocking out, this afternoon, a monograph on the survival of the Pteranodon. It will make a stir in the scientific world. Don't be worried about my part in this. I'll be cautious to-morrow. No other news to tell; nothing but this counts.

Your affectionate son,

STANFORD.

P. S.—Dad, couldn't you do something to help Haynes's people? Not financially—I don't believe they need that. If they're anything like Haynes, they wouldn't accept it anyhow. But go and see them, and tell them how much we thought of him here, and how he died trying to get at the truth. I've written them, but you can do so much more on the ground.

▼▼▼

DOCUMENT No. 3 (B). *Statement by Stanford Colton regarding his part in the events of the morning of September 22, 1902.*

This is written at the request of Professor Ravenden, to be embodied with his report on the Montauk Point tragedies. On the morning of September 22d (the day after the killing of Harris Haynes) I went to the beach opposite Stony Gully. It was seven o'clock when I reached the point where the bodies of Haynes and Serdholm were found. Professor Ravenden was to have accompanied me. He had started out while I was at breakfast, however, through a misunderstanding as to time. His route was a roundabout one, bringing him to the spot after my arrival, as will appear in his report. I went directly down the shore. In my belt was my revolver.

As I came opposite Stony Gully I carefully examined the sand. It had been much trodden by those who had taken the body of Haynes to the house. Toward the soft beach and the gully's mouth, however, there had been no effacement, though there was a slight blurring effected by a mild fall of rain. My first action was to look carefully about the country to discover any possible peril near by. Having satisfied myself that I was not threatened, I set about inspecting the sand. There were no fresh marks. The five-taloned tracks were in several places almost as distinct as on the previous day. Fortunately, owing to the scanty population and the slow transmission of news, there had been very few visitors to the scene, and those few had been careful in their movements, so the evidence was not trodden out.

For a closer examination I got down on my hands and knees above one of the tracks. There was the secret if I could but read it. The footprint was in all respects the counterpart of the sketch made by Haynes, and of the impress on the Cretaceous rock of Professor Ravenden. I might have been in that posture two or three minutes, my mind immersed in conjecture. Then I rose, and as I stood and looked down, there suddenly flashed into my brain the solution. I started forward to the next mark, and as I advanced, something sang in the air behind me. I knew it was some swiftly flying thing; knew in the same agonizing moment that I was doomed; tried to face my death; and then there was a dreadful, grinding shock, a flame with jagged teeth tore through my brain, and I fell forward into darkness.



DOCUMENT No. 4. *The explanation by Professor Willis Ravenden, F.R.S., etc., of the events of September 20, 21, 22, 1902, surrounding the death of Paul Serdholm and Harris Haynes, and the striking down of Stanford Colton.*

Of the events of the three days, September 20, 21, and 22, 1902, at Montauk Point, culminating in my own experience of the final date, I write with some degree of pain due to the personal element in my own attitude toward the case, and, as such, unworthy of a balanced intelligence. It is the more difficult for me to recount equably these matters, in that I was shaken, at successive moments of the *dénoûment*, by many and violent passions: grief, fear, horror, and, finally, an inhuman rage which shamefully rankles in my memory. Yet what I here set down is told with such fidelity as I can achieve, bearing due reference to the comparative value of the elements, and without, I trust, unnecessary circumlocution or undue obtrusion of my own sentiments and theories.

Upon the death of my esteemed young friend, Mr. Haynes, I made minute examination of the vestigia near the body. These were obviously the footprints of the same creature that killed Serdholm, the coast-guard. Not only the measurements and depth of indentation, but the intervals corresponded exactly with those observed in the first investigation. The non-existence of five-toed birds drove me to the consideration of other winged creatures, and certainly none may say that, with the evidence on hand, my hypothesis of the survival and reappearance of the Pteranodon was not justified.

Having concluded my examination into the circumstances of Mr. Haynes's death, I returned to Third House and set about embodying the remarkable events in a monograph. In this work I employed the entire afternoon and evening of the 21st, with the exception of an inconsiderable space devoted to a letter which it seemed proper to write to the afflicted family of Mr. Haynes, and in which I suggested for their comfort the fact that he met his death in the noble cause of scientific investigation. In pursuance of an understanding with Mr. Colton, he and I were to have visited, early on the following morning, the scene of the tragedies. By a misconception of the plan, I started out, before he left, thinking that he had already gone. My purpose was to proceed to the spot along the cliffs, instead of by the beach, this route affording a more favorable view, though an

intermittent one, as it presents a succession of smoothly rolling hillocks. Hardly had I left the house when the disturbance of the grasses incidental to my passage put to flight a fine specimen of the *Lycæna pseudargiolus*, whose variations I have been investigating. I had, of course, taken my net with me, partly, indeed, as a weapon of defense, as the butt is readily detachable, and heavily loaded.

In the light of subsequent events I must confess my culpability in allowing even so absorbing an interest as this that suddenly beset my path to turn me from my engagement to meet Mr. Colton. Instinctively, however, I pursued the insect. Although this species, as is well known, exhibits a power of sustained flight possessed by none other of the lepidopteræ of corresponding wing-area, I hoped that, owing to the chill morning air, this specimen would be readily captured. Provocatively, as it would seem, it alighted at short intervals, but on each occasion rose again as I was almost within reach. Thus lured on I described a half-circle, and was, approximately, a third of a mile inland, when finally I netted my prey from the leaves of a *Quercus ilicifolia*. Having deposited it in the cyanide of potassium jar which I carried on a shoulder-strap, I made haste, not without some quickenings of self-reproach, toward the cliff. Incentive to greater haste was furnished by a fog-bank that was approaching from the south. Heading directly for the nearest point of the cliff I reached it before the fog arrived. The first object that caught my eye, as it ranged for the readiest access to the beach, was the outstretched body of Colton lying upon the hard sand where Serdholm and Haynes had met their deaths. He was barely within my scope of vision, the nearer beach being cut off from sight by the cliff line.

I may say, without intemperance of expression, that for the moment I was stunned into inaction. Then came the sense of my own guilt and responsibility. Along the cliff I ran, at full speed, dipped down into a hollow, where, for the time, the beach was shut off from view, and surmounted the hill beyond, which brought me almost above the body a little to the east of the gully. The fog, too, had been advancing swiftly, and now as I reached the cliff's edge it spread a gray mantle over the body lying there alone.

Already I had reached the edge of the gully, when there moved very slowly out upon the hard sand a thing so out of all conception, an apparition so monstrous to the sight, that my

net fell from my hand, and a loud cry burst from me. In the gray folds of mist it wavered, assuming shapes beyond comprehension. Suddenly it doubled on itself, contracted to a compact mass, underwent a strange inversion, and before my clearing vision there arose a man, dreadful of aspect indeed, but still a human being, and, as such, not beyond human powers to cope with. Coincidentally with this recognition I noted a knife, inordinately long of blade and bulky of handle, on the sand almost under Colton. Toward this the man had been moving when my cry arrested him, and now he stood facing the height with strained eye and bestially gnashing teeth.

Here was no time for delay. The facile descent of the gully was out of the question. It was over the cliff or nothing, for if Colton was alive his only chance was that I should reach his assailant before the latter could come at the knife. Upon the flash of the thought I was in mid-air, a giddy terror dulling my brain as I plunged down through the fog. Fortunately for me—for the bones of sixty years are brittle—I landed upon a slope of soft sand. Forward I pitched, threw myself completely over, and, carried to my feet by the impetus, ran down the lesser slope upon the man.

That he was obsessed by a mania of murder was written on his face and in his eyes. But now his expression, as he turned toward me, was that of a beast alarmed. To hold his attention, I shouted. The one desideratum was to reach him before he turned again to the knife and Colton.

The maniac crouched as I ran in upon him, and I must confess to a certain savage exultation as I noted that he had little the advantage of me in size or weight. Although not a large man, I may say that I am of wiry frame, which my out-of-door life has kept in condition. So I felt no great misgivings as to the outcome. We closed. As my opponent's muscles tightened on mine I knew, with a sudden, daunting shock, that I had met the strength of fury. For a moment we strained, I striving for a hold which would enable me to lift him from his feet. Then with a rabid scream the creature dashed his face into my shoulder, and bit through shirt and flesh until I felt the teeth grate on my shoulder-blade.

Not improbably this saved my life and Colton's. For, upon the outrage of that assault, a fury not less insane than that of my enemy fired me, and I, who have ever practised a certain scientific austerity of emotional life, became, to my dishonor, a raging beast. Power as of steam flashed through every

vein; strength as of steel distended every muscle. Clutching at the throat of my assailant I tore that hideous face from my shoulder. My right hand, drawn back for a blow, twitched the cord of my heavy poison bottle. Shouting aloud I swung the formidable weapon up and brought it down upon his head with repeated blows. His grasp relaxed. I sprang back for a fuller swing and beat him to the ground. The jar was shattered, but such was my ecstasy of murderousness that I forgot the specimen of pseudargiolus, which fell with the fragments and was trodden into the sand.

In my hand I still held the base of the jar. My head was whirling. I staggered backward, and with barely sense enough left to know that the deadly fumes of the cyanide were doing their work, flung it far away. A mist fell like a curtain somewhere between my eyes and my brain, befogging the processes of thought. That Colton was now sitting up, I knew to be a hallucination. Colton was dead—Colton was dead, said the spirit of murder deep in my brain, and it remained for me to kill his slayer. The world reeled about me, so I dropped to all fours and crawled to the man. That Colton should seem to have arisen, and to be staggering toward us, further enraged me. It was but fair that he should not interfere until I had finished my work. There was blood on the man's face—my blood and his—as I set my fingers to his throat. Another moment and I should have had the murder of a fellow-man on my soul, but an arm slipped under my chest, and a voice gasped:

"In God's name, Professor, don't kill the poor devil!"

My hold relaxed. I felt myself lifted, and then I was lying on my back, looking into Colton's white face. I must have been saying something, for Colton replied, as if to a question:

"It's all right, Professor. There's no pseudargiolus or Pteranodon, or anything. Just lie quiet for a moment."

But it was borne in upon me that I had lost my prize. "Let me up!" I cried. "I've lost it! It fell when the poison jar broke."

"There, there," he soothed, as one calms a delirious person. "Just wait——"

"I'm speaking of my specimen, the pseudargiolus." The mist was beginning to lift from my brain, and the mind now swung dizzily back to the great speculation. "The Pteranodon?" I cried, looking about me.

"There." Colton laughed shakily as he pointed to the blood-besmeared form lying quiet on the sand.

"But the footprints! the footprints! The fossil marks on the rock?"

"Footprints on the rock. Handprints, here."

"Handprints!" I repeated; "Tell me slowly. I must confess to a degree of bewilderment to which I am not accustomed."

"No wonder, sir. Here it is. I saw it all just before I was hit. This man is Serdholm's cousin, the juggler. He's crazy, probably from Serdholm's blow. He's evidently been waiting for a chance to kill Serdholm. That rock in the gully's mouth is where he waited. You've seen circus-jugglers throw knives. You know with what marvelous skill they do it. Well, that's the way he killed Serdholm. In his crazy cunning he saw that footprints would give him away, so he utilized another of his circus tricks and recovered the knife by walking on his hands. Perhaps the snipe tracks hereabout suggested it."

"But Mr. Haynes? And yourself?"

"I don't know why he wanted to kill us unless he feared we would discover his secret. I escaped because I was going forward

as he threw, and that must have disturbed his aim so that the knife turned in the air and the handle struck me, knocking me senseless."

Here the juggler groaned, and we busied ourselves with bringing him to. He is now in an asylum, with a fair chance of recovery.

Mr. Colton is entirely recovered from his experience, as am I, except for an inconvenient stiffness in the muscles of my right shoulder where I was bitten. My physician advises that I train myself to manipulate the capturing-net with my left hand. After a long search I found the remains of the pseudargiolus specimen, with one wing almost intact. It may still be of aid in my work on the structural changes of this species. My monograph on the Pteranodon, it is hardly needful to state, will not be published. At the same time I maintain that the survival of this formidable creature, while now lacking definite proof, is none the less strictly within the limits of scientific possibility.

WILLIS RAVENDEN.